

abandoned homes in my district and across the Nation.

Remnants of the foreclosure crisis still linger everywhere. Home values plummeted during the country's economic crisis and have continued to decline year after year due to the blighted and abandoned homes. Nationally, nearly 4½ percent of mortgages are in foreclosure. More than a quarter of mortgage borrowers are underwater, and 11 percent of all homes are vacant.

City and State governments need our help. In the Cleveland area, 15,000 homes are vacant and in need of demolition. Demolishing these structures will cost approximately \$100 million.

Homeowners are depending on us to help stop the free-fall of their property values. It is time we develop and pass meaningful legislation that promotes the revitalization of our neighborhoods.

PICAYUNE 5A FOOTBALL STATE CHAMPIONS

(Mr. PALAZZO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PALAZZO. The city of Picayune might be small, but its legacy is one of strength and power. In the early 1900s, trains out of New Orleans stopped in Picayune to pick up steam engines to power them northwards and uphill. This vision of a powerful locomotive steaming ahead is a good metaphor for this year's Picayune High School Maroon Tide football team.

According to Head Coach Dodd Lee, people who really like what they do usually do it pretty well, and if that's the case, Coach Lee's players must really like playing great football.

In a 38-21 win over Starkville, the Maroon Tide clenched the 5A win, bringing Picayune its first State title since 1986.

Aside from the obvious desire to win on both sides of the ball, Picayune has some secret weapons on their team, namely: quarterback, Ben Hickman; leading rusher, Deronte Magee; receiver, Justin Mark; kicker, Dalton O'Meara; and a small but mighty pair of linebackers, Troy Egana and Cody Smith.

Congratulations to the city of Picayune and to Picayune High School on their State championship.

PROTECTING WORKERS' RIGHTS

(Mr. CARNAHAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CARNAHAN. Mr. Speaker, it's no secret that my Republican colleagues really don't want to extend the payroll tax cuts and unemployment insurance. Republican Members have called it a gimmick. They've admitted the only reason they brought it up for a vote was that they didn't want to take the political heat for raising taxes on the

middle class. But instead of coming up with an honest compromise designed to actually pass, Republicans have filed a bill with provisions that wind up actually hurting the middle class and many still struggling in this slow economy.

Playing risky political games with our clean air, our clean water, raising Medicare premiums on seniors, that's not the way Americans expect us to govern, and designing a bill that can't pass is the type of political games that my Missouri constituents are fed up with. We need an honest bill now.

I call on my Republican colleagues to stop the obstruction, stop the distraction, stop the games. Let's pass a real payroll tax bill now.

WE MUST DO BETTER

(Mr. JOHNSON of Illinois asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. JOHNSON of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong objection to the animosity and gridlock that's been the overarching theme of this first session of the 112th Congress.

I make dozens of calls and similar personal contacts directly with my constituents every day, probably more than any other Member of Congress. These people live in the real world beyond the beltway environment in which too many public officials live and work, sheltered from reality, by communication primarily with each other in a self-created climate that bears little similarity to the rest of America.

In my years in public office, I have never heard the level of anger I hear today. Our approval ratings are in the tank, and they should be. We are gripped in gridlock because people on both sides of the aisle in both Chambers and in the White House are more concerned with politics than progress.

As our economy continues to stagger, our attention should be focused on putting people to work and providing a stability in public policy. We can only do that through cooperation, compromise, and civility.

My message to leadership and membership, including myself, in both Chambers is this: We have to do the business the people expect us to do, efficiently and in an adult-like manner. Anything less is both irresponsible and unacceptable. We can and we should do vastly better than what we are.

TAXES

(Mr. BACA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BACA. First of all, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome our troops back; and as we welcome them back, let's make sure we take care of them while they're here in the United States as well and make their lives a lot better.

Mr. Speaker, it's time to stop showboating and get to work. If Congress does not act by the end of the year, 160

million Americans will face a tax hike next year and another 60 million people will lose unemployment benefits.

Failure to extend unemployment benefits has a real impact on men and women across every State, people like Norma Lopez from my district in Ontario. While Norma has been looking for work, her unemployment benefits have kept her from getting foreclosed and has helped her make car payments.

Unfortunately, the Republican proposal is full of poison pills and amendments that make the bill dead on arrival in the Senate. Republicans are asking seniors to pay more for Medicare and they're leaving the unemployed out in the cold, yet they refuse to ask millionaires and billionaires to pay their fair share.

Stop the political games. People's lives are hanging in the balance. They deserve help. Let's work together on a compromise bill that will help all of us.

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THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE WATCHING AND WAITING ON THE U.S. SENATE TO ACT

(Mr. BONNER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BONNER. Mr. Speaker, with the American people looking on, Members of the House, once again, find ourselves in a waiting position—waiting and waiting and waiting on Senator REID and his Democrat majority in the U.S. Senate as they decide whether they are going to let the government shut down tomorrow night at midnight; whether they are going to let tax relief for millions of Americans, middle class families, expire at the end of this month; whether they are going to let long-term unemployment benefits expire; and whether they are going to keep America's doctors from being hammered with a 27 percent increase on their Medicare reimbursement.

Mr. Speaker, the people's House is doing the people's work. As you know, we've passed 28 bills, all aimed at creating new American jobs. Sadly, all the majority on the other side of the Capitol seem able to do is poke sticks at what we've done, but they haven't offered a realistic option or passed a single thing.

Mr. Speaker, the clock is ticking, and the American people are watching and waiting on the Senate to act.

STEM EDUCATION

(Mr. HIGGINS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HIGGINS. Mr. Speaker, I believe that one of the keys to keeping our country globally competitive is to increase the number of American students who are prepared to pursue careers in science, engineering and technology. So it is with special pride that